

## FRANCO RECEIVES JEWISH VISITORS

Tells 2 B'nai B'rith Aides  
Easing Religious Laws  
Was 'Act of Justice'

By TAD SZULC

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MADRID, Dec. 21 — Generalissimo Francisco Franco reportedly told two visiting Jewish officials from the United States today that Spain's new freedom-of-religion legislation was "an act of simple justice."

The Spanish leader held a 25-minute conference at the Prado Palace here with Dr. William A. Wexler of Savannah, Ga., president of B'nai B'rith, the Jewish service organization, and Saul E. Joffe of Falls Church, Va., director-general of B'nai B'rith's Office of International Affairs.

The two officials came to Madrid to be received by General Franco, following a meeting in Rome last Monday with Pope Paul VI. They discussed the Spanish religious question with both leaders.

The new legislation, now expected to go before the Cortes (parliament) for final approval Jan. 20, establishes legal protection for worship by non-Roman Catholics. At present, there is a policy of official religious tolerance.

### Not Absolute Equality

Because this predominantly Catholic nation accepts Roman Catholicism as the state religion, Jews, Protestants and other minorities will still not enjoy absolute equality.

There are approximately 35,000 Protestants and 6,000 Jews in Spain. The new law will allow them to worship openly in clearly marked churches and synagogues, form religious associations, celebrate civil marriages, be buried in their own cemeteries, and be free from obligatory participation in Catholic services or teachings in schools, the armed forces and prisons.

General Franco, it was understood, also said during the conversation that he had given Spanish diplomatic and consular officials in Europe orders during World War II to offer protection to Jews persecuted by the Nazis.

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